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NEWS RELEASE

Jan 27, 1997

NOTED CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER VISITS UM

MISSOULA --

Robert Booker, a leader in Tennessee's civil rights movement in the turbulent 1960s, will help the Missoula community close out Martin Luther King Jr. activities and usher in Black History Month when he visits The University of Montana campus Thursday, Jan. 30.

Booker, executive director of the Beck Cultural Exchange Center at Knoxville's Museum of Black History and Culture, will discuss "The Black Struggles of the 1960s and the 1990s Compared" at 8 p.m. in the Montana Theatre in UM's Performing Arts and Radio/Television Center. The free, public lecture is sponsored by the 1996-97 President's Lecture Series and UM's Martin Luther King Jr. Committee.

As a student at Knoxville College, Booker led sit-ins to desegregate downtown lunch counters and movie theaters in his native city. In 1966, he was the first black to be elected from Knoxville to the Tennessee Legislature, where he served until 1971. Later he became the first black to serve on the Tennessee Civil Service Commission, appointed by then-Gov. Lamar Alexander.

Booker has been executive director of the Beck Cultural Exchange Center for 14 years. He is the author of two books: "Two Hundred Years of Black Culture in Knoxville, Tennessee, 1791-1991" and "And There was Light! The 120 Year History of Knoxville College, 1875-1995."

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Contact: Richard Drake, UM history professor and President's Lecture Series organizer, 243-2981.

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